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Multimodality and English Foreign Language:

Image-Text Interaction for Enhancing Students' Reading Comprehension

MASTER DISSERTATION
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SUMMARY IN SPANISH / RESÚMEN EN ESPAÑOL

En el área de la lingüística aplicada, los estudios sobre multimodalidad (que versan sobre la interacción de imagen y texto, constituyendo varios modos de comprensión) han aumentado recientemente gracias al creciente interés de los investigadores en este campo (véase, por ejemplo, Jewitt, 2008, 2009; Kress, 2003; O'Halloran, 2011; Serafini, 2011; Unsworth, 2001; Ventola *et al.* 2004).

En el mundo globalizado en el que vivimos, las comunicaciones ya no son lo que eran antes, puesto que “la revolución de las telecomunicaciones (...) está cambiando la estructura social, económica y política de todos los países del mundo” (Graddol, 2006: 42). Como resultado de la cambiante situación, la forma de comunicación está adquiriendo una nueva dimensión: la dimensión multimodal.

Autores como Norris (2004) u O'Halloran (2001) señalan la existencia de esta dimensión multimodal dentro de la comunicación interpersonal ya que al hablar, se mantiene cierta distancia con el interlocutor, se utilizan gestos, o se mira al oyente, entre otras cosas, además de utilizar el lenguaje. No obstante, la multimodalidad abarca otros campos como las investigaciones en semiótica (Iedema, 2003; Unsworth, 2008; Ventola and Moya, 2009); discurso (Norris & Jones, 2005; O'Halloran, 2011); estudios de género (Bateman, 2008); o tecnología (Jones, 2009; Lemke, 2002), entre otros.

Esta investigación se enmarca en el ámbito de la multimodalidad en educación, concretamente dentro de la comprensión lectora. En este sector, estudios anteriores han investigado el papel de la lectura en el proceso de construcción de significado (Unsworth & Cléirigh, 2009), o las diferentes formas de comprender textos (Walsh, 2006). Sin embargo, la escasez de estudios interdisciplinarios que consideren la función multimodal junto con la comprensión lectora desde el punto de vista de la enseñanza de idiomas, ha acentuado la necesidad de este estudio.

Por este motivo, el propósito de la presente investigación es analizar el papel que juega la multimodalidad en el diseño y comprensión de la sección de lectura de los libros de texto de inglés como lengua extranjera. La hipótesis de partida se fundamenta en un estudio similar llevado a cabo por Domínguez y Maíz (2010) sobre la multimodalidad y la comprensión auditiva en inglés como lengua extranjera. El resultado principal de esta investigación sostiene que la multimodalidad influye en la comprensión de los alumnos. De ahí que este estudio pretenda confirmar dicho resultado, aplicado a la comprensión lectora en la lengua extranjera.

El corpus de este estudio comprende un total de seis secciones de lectura, correspondientes a dos libros de texto de enseñanza general del inglés como lengua extranjera: *Framework* (2005) y *Total English* (2006). El criterio principal para su selección radica en la reciente publicación de los libros y la juventud del público al que va dirigido. Las secciones de lectura se han elegido por su temática, intentando que éstas fueran de interés para un público adolescente. Por eso, se han escogido lecturas que tratan sobre la música, los medios de comunicación y las normas o tabúes.

El instrumento de análisis empleado para la descripción teórica del corpus ha sido el modelo de composición visual propuesto por Gunther Kress y Theo van Leeuwen en 1996. Esta teoría presenta tres principios para analizar cualquier tipo de representación visual. El primer principio es el valor de la información, que supone la ubicación de los elementos en torno a un eje vertical, horizontal o central, otorgando distintos significados en función del patrón que se siga. El segundo principio es la prominencia de un elemento con respecto al resto, adquirida por su tamaño, nitidez, contraste o perspectiva empleada. Por último, el principio del marco constituye una buena herramienta para resaltar un tipo de información en concreto al enmarcar dicho elemento.

La realización de esta investigación ha consistido, en primer lugar, en el análisis teórico del corpus empleado, a través del modelo de composición visual de Kress y van Leeuwen (2006). De esta manera, se ha procedido a la modificación de las secciones de lectura con el objetivo de que una versión mejorara la comprensión del texto y otra versión la empeorara. Después de distribuir ambas secciones a los alumnos (previamente divididos en dos subgrupos y alternando la composición de dichos grupos para no afectar a los resultados), se ha continuado con la corrección de los ejercicios de comprensión lectora, formando la base del análisis. Éste se ha llevado a cabo contabilizando el número correcto de respuestas a dichos ejercicios y comparando los resultados tanto de la versión original de la lectura como de la modificada.

Los resultados del estudio, aunque limitados por el tamaño de la muestra analizada y los participantes involucrados, muestran que los tres principios del modelo de composición visual se han utilizado en todas las secciones de lectura en mayor o menor medida, y que la ubicación de los elementos más frecuente se realiza en torno a los ejes vertical y horizontal. El eje central, por su parte, no es de uso tan común en las culturas occidentales, pero sí en las orientales. Con respecto al rendimiento de los alumnos, los resultados apuntan, en términos generales, una importante correspondencia entre un buen diseño de la sección de lectura y una buena comprensión del texto leído. De esta manera, se confirma también el resultado obtenido por Domínguez y Maíz (2010) sobre la comprensión auditiva. Por tanto, la multimodalidad, o interacción de imagen y texto, juega un papel determinante en la comprensión de los alumnos, ya sea auditiva o lectora.

ABSTRACT

The present study analyzes the function of multimodality in relation to reading comprehension in English as a foreign language. It tries to determine the different aspects encompassing the design of reading sections, and their enhancing or diminishing effect on students' reading comprehension. Following Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) theory of visual composition, the study examines six reading sections from two general, intermediate level textbooks. The findings reveal that the principles of visual composition remain consistent through the considered layouts, being the horizontal and vertical patterns the most frequent representations. Furthermore, results show significant correlations between well-designed layouts and a stronger performance on comprehension exercises.

Key words: multimodality, reading comprehension, visual composition

1. INTRODUCTION

Multimodal Studies is a proliferating field within the area of Applied Linguistics and across many others, such as: Anthropology, Sociology, Discourse Studies, Musicology, Film Studies, and so on. This growing interest in the analysis of image-text interaction is one of the results of the modern globalized world in which we live (Jewitt, 2008, 2009a; Kress, 2003; O'Halloran, 2011; Serafini, 2011; Unsworth, 2001; Ventola *et al.* 2004).

Globalization has brought about “new communications media [which are] changing the social, economic and political structure of societies across the world” (Graddol, 2006: 42). As a result of this changing scenario, communication has evolved acquiring also a multimodal dimension. According to Norris:

People in interaction seldom communicate only through language. A person takes up a certain kind of distance to others, takes up a particular posture, gestures while speaking, and at times gazes at the interlocutor. (2004: Preface)

This multimodal dimension of communication has been highlighted by O'Halloran too in her review: *Multimodal Discourse Analysis*. She claims that “communication is inherently multimodal and that literacy is not [solely] confined to language” (2011: 6). Such a statement unfolds the close relationship between *multimodality* and *multiliteracies* since both of them underpin various *modes* or resources to convey information. However, slight differences distinguish them. Multimodality deals with forms of representation within the sphere of design –addressed especially in this paper– while multiliteracies entail certain characteristics to become linguistically, culturally, and technologically educated within the sphere of pedagogy (Jewitt, 2008). Thus, school literacies include a wide range of abilities, from the traditional reading and writing, to the current knowing-how skills like thinking critically, being creative,

working on teams, using a computer, searching the Internet, and so forth. As Unsworth said:

The parameters of school literacies have been significantly extended with the rapid cultural and technological changes in literate forms of communication in recent years. Predominant among these is the growing impact of images in an increasing range of texts. (2001: 1)

Among this range of texts, students may encounter: magazines, advertisements, graphic novels, websites and so forth, which make learners “read” a particular page in different and simultaneous ways. Serafini has also underlined the importance of the visual element within texts by stating that “the texts that adolescents encounter today are often multimodal, meaning they incorporate a variety of modes, including visual images, hypertext, and graphic design elements along with written text” (2011: 342). In brief, the image-text interrelation establishes the grounding for this investigation.

1.1 Literature review

Multimodal research began in the 1980s and 1990s in respond to the seeking of answers to problems alike. The theoretical underpinning regarding this kind of research is the work by Michael Halliday, principally his systemic functional grammar (1985 [1994, 2004]), and his social semiotic approach to language (1978). Based on these founding principles, two multimodal branches arose: one towards the visual design whilst the other addresses semiotics. The most salient authors of the former are Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen, whose pioneering work *Reading Images: the Grammar of Visual Design* (1996 [2006]) established the foundations of one the major multimodal branches regarding layout and composition. Conversely, the most noticeable author of the other multimodal branch is Michael O’Toole, whose grounding work was *The Language of Displayed Art* (1994 [2010]), dealing mainly with painting, sculpture and architecture.

Successive authors followed these branches expanding multimodal studies on other domains. Among these, there are: research on interaction (Jaworski & Thurlow, 2009; Martinec, 2000; Norris, 2004, 2009); semiotics (Iedema, 2003; Unsworth, 2008; Ventola and Moya, 2009); metaphor (Famelart, 2010; Forceville and Urios-Aparisi, 2009); discourse (Norris & Jones, 2005; O'Halloran, 2011); identity (Ivarsson *et al.*, 2009; Lemke, 2009); genre (Bateman, 2008); technology (Jones, 2009; Lemke, 2002); transcription (Baldry and Thibault, 2006) or speech and music (van Leeuwen, 1999; West, 2009), among others.

More specifically, this study has a concrete interest in multimodal research and education. In this field, the concept of *multimodal communicative competence* was coined by Terry Royce in an article with the same title (2007). Besides, other studies have reviewed the closed link between multimodality and multiliteracies within the current Media Age (Jewitt, 2006; Kress, 2003; Street *et al.*, 2009) or at educational settings (Serafini, 2011; Sewell and Denton, 2011; Unsworth, 2001; Walsh, 2010). Even more precisely, the connection between multimodality and foreign languages has been previously considered by Farias (2007, 2011) and Lamy (2007).

Nevertheless, little attention has been devoted to the study of multimodality and reading. On the one hand, the work by Unsworth & Cléirigh (2009): *Multimodality and Reading: the Construction of Meaning through Image-Text Interaction* shows the advancements done by the authors regarding the construction of meaning within multimodal texts. On the other hand, Walsh's (2006) *The "Textual Shift": Examining the Reading Process with Print, Visual and Multimodal Texts* illustrates the various manners in which different texts can be understood. Consequently, hardly any previous research has focused on the role of multimodality and the reading comprehension of a foreign language. Therefore, the present study aims at making a contribution to this

field – following in particular the visual design branch initiated by Kress and van Leeuwen by examining the multimodal design and its effect on reading comprehension of the reading sections within two English as foreign language textbooks. In this sense, it follows the investigation initiated by Domínguez and Maíz (2010) relating multimodal design and listening comprehension of two First Certificate of English textbooks.

1.2 Investigation rationale

The core rationale behind the multimodal analysis carried out in this study can be found at the strong reliance on textbooks that supports conventional Spanish education (Santo-Tomás González, 2011: 2). It is this emphasis on textbook overuse that has driven me to wonder about the effectiveness of teaching materials. Providing the extra amount of attention required by students in a foreign language class, the dependence on materials within these types of subjects can be stronger. Hence, well-designed resources can represent an advantage for students within the language classes since “images and texts provide readers with a foundation for comprehension” (Serafini, 2011: 348). Accordingly, it seems adequate to focus on the disposition of images and texts within textbooks as one of the elements affecting foreign language understanding, given textbooks’ regular use in class.

1.3 Aims and research questions

The departing hypothesis relies on Domínguez and Maíz’s main finding: “multimodality does play a significant role in students’ degree of performance” (2010: 108). Given that these authors implemented the multimodal analysis in listening

comprehension, this research intends to test the same hypothesis on the comprehension of reading sections by answering the following questions:

1. What kind of visual compositions do textbooks examined in this study include in their reading sections? Can any different types be distinguished? Is there any predominating one?
2. What are the most recurrent visual aspects employed within the analyzed sections – information value, salience, or framing¹?
3. Does the design of the selected reading sections enhance or worsen students' comprehension?

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to analyze the role multimodality plays in the design and comprehension of English as foreign language reading sections. Moreover, it tries to confirm Domínguez and Maíz's (2010) main finding about the important role of multimodality regarding students' performance applied to the sphere of reading comprehension.

1.4 Structure of the study

The present dissertation is divided into six chapters. After this introduction, it follows the methodological approach applied in this study. It describes the criteria used for the selection of materials, the participants involved, and the guiding procedure of the research. Chapter three provides the theoretical background that contextualizes the investigation by defining first the concept of multimodality and reviewing then the theories of reading comprehension and visual composition. Afterwards, chapter four analyses the selected materials by providing an in-depth description of both the original and the modified reading sections. Subsequently, chapter five presents the results gathered from the analysis of students' performance and discuss the findings. Finally, chapter six summarizes the investigation in the concluding section.

¹ These concepts will be defined in detail in the theoretical background section of the present study.

2. DATA AND METHODOLOGY

This paper is a qualitative and cross-sectional case study of the influence of textbooks' layouts in the students' reading comprehension. The qualitative approach was applied because data was dealt with in the form of image-text interactions requiring an in-depth analysis. In addition, it is a cross-sectional document due to its focus on a specific period of time: three general English as a foreign language sessions of sixty minutes each. As a final remark, the research constitutes a case study owing to the limitations on time constraints and the restricted size of the sample since few students were involved and not a very large amount of reading sections were included so as not to discourage students. Nevertheless, the fact of being a case study provides the opportunity to fully analyze the extent of this investigation properly contributing to research on multimodality.

2.1 The Corpora

The study is based on six reading sections from two different intermediate English textbooks utilized with the owners' permission: *Framework* (2005) and *Total English* (2006). The main reason for their selection was the relatively difficult availability of materials since two requirements needed to be fulfilled: not only was it essential that books were addressed to young adult learners of intermediate general English as a foreign language – B1 level of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (2001) –, but also that the books' year of publication was recent. The selected books met the former requirement since their final hard cover suitably specified the level and type of learners. Besides, a recent publication year was important because texts' topics and especially images needed to be up-to-date so as to attract students' attention. Both books met these prerequisites; hence, their choice.

After having selected the textbooks, readings sections had to be chosen according to several criteria too. Firstly, readings' topicality had to be appealing for students in order to engage them in the reading process. For such a purpose, popular texts about music, media, and taboo issues appearing within both books were preferred. *Table 1* below shows the relationship between the books, the appointed texts and their topicality. Secondly, the complexity of the texts was measured in terms of length, vocabulary, and grammatical structures. The selected texts have an average extent of 250-350 words containing a majority of regular terms and a few demanding ones, as well as past and present tenses recognizable by students. Finally, readings' activities were taken into account to ensure the comprehension of the text. These tasks included answering short questions, true/false statements, and linking exercises, all of them alike within both textbooks.

	Textbook					
	<i>Framework (2005)</i>			<i>Total English (2006)</i>		
	Music	Media	Taboo	Music	Media	Taboo
Topic						
Nº Words	290	250	300	310	260	340
Predominant Structure	Passive	Present perfect	Present & past simple	Past simple	Passive	Conditional
Comprehension Activities	Linking exercises	Linking exercises	True/false & linking ex.	Short questions	True/false & short questions	True/false & short questions

Table 1: Relationship between books and selected reading sections

2.2 Participants

Learners engaged in the study were enrolled in an extracurricular program from a public high school of the center of Madrid, Spain. The program aimed to develop students' English skills by offering two sessions per week of sixty minutes each. Since there were fifteen students enrolled in the program but just ten attended on a regular basis, the research was conducted in a total of ten participants at the end of the academic course. The reason for choosing this date was based on the fact that students were supposed to have already developed a better command of the target language by that time and they were also supposed to be familiarized with most grammatical structures appearing within the reading sections. Participants were aged fourteen to sixteen years old and had a lower-intermediate to intermediate level of English labeled by their performance on curricular classroom exams. The subjects' background language was even as all of them shared Spanish as their mother tongue. Correspondingly, English was acknowledged to be their first foreign language to be learnt. Therefore, participants agreed on several characteristics that made them a homogeneous group.

2.3 Procedure

Prior to commencing the study, textbooks and reading sections were selected according to the aforementioned criteria. A total of three reading sections from each textbook and their modified versions –explained below– comprised the corpus for this investigation. After data collection, the original reading sections were analyzed according to Kress and Van Leeuwen's (2006) model of visual composition. Later on, samples were scanned and modified using Photoshop software as determined by the notions of information value, salience, and framing, established by the above mentioned authors. The modifications performed to each reading section will be detailed in the upcoming

analysis section but all of them were adjusted in a particular way so as to have two versions of the same text: one of them attempted to improve student's reading comprehension whereas the other sought to worsen it. Following this stage, both versions were handed to participants previously arranged into two subgroups: one group received the original reading section whilst the modified version – either worsened or improved – was distributed to the other group. With the intention of avoiding biased results, group composition was changed and altered so that each group varied at receiving either the original or modified reading sections. Besides, any helping warming up activities were also avoided, so as not to affect students' preliminary stage of comprehension. Afterwards, learners were given twenty-five minutes to read the given text and to complete the adjoining exercises. The final step consisted in gathering results from the displayed texts and correcting the comprehension exercises attached to each reading section. The analysis of the data was carried out by comparing the number of correct answers students produced in both the original and the modified version of each reading section. Finally, observations were presented in a graphic form in order to better explain the researched findings.

3. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The term *multimodality* is difficult to define on a general basis since it is associated to a wide variety of disciplines and fields, ranging from learning to athletics. In a broad sense, multimodality refers to diverse kinds of methods applied to a particular area. In this case, multimodality can be found for instance, in the field of foreign languages to teach new vocabulary through the use of pictures. Hence, the fields this research is concerned with are the visual and the educational ones.

As well-known authors within the visual domain, Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen proposed that: “the analysis of composite or multimodal texts [comprises] any text whose meanings are realized through more than one semiotic code” (2006: 177). These semiotic codes are encompassed by the label “modality” which the authors describe as follows:

The term “modality” comes from linguistics and refers to the truth value or credibility of (linguistically realized) statements about the world. The grammar of modality focuses on such modality markers as the auxiliary verbs which accord specific degrees of modality to statements. (2006:155)

Thus, the use of several modes or semiotic codes affect to the composition as a whole combining the meaning of its elements, whether these elements are pictures, text, visuals, graphics or so on. The result is an *integrated text* which includes both visual and verbal aspects.

Regarding the educational field, one of the most representative authors is Carey Jewitt (2006, 2008, and 2009). Her research deals with visual and multimodal methodologies in the classroom practice unfolding the way exchanges of information are performed. In this author’s opinion, multimodality is defined as:

[Those] approaches that understand communication and representation to be more than about language, and which attend to the full range of communicational forms people use –image, gesture, gaze, posture, and so on – and the relationship between them. (Jewitt, 2009:14)

Jewitt's research regards multimodality in the realm of communication as an interpersonal exchange due to the paralinguistic elements conveyed in the articulation and transference of ideas. She focuses her investigation in the interactions mainly between the teacher and students.

Nevertheless, this paper does not focus on the paralinguistic elements embedded in a communicational exchange; on the contrary, it deals with education emphasizing the learning process. Thus, a good definition of multimodality taking into account an orientation towards learners can be as follows: “multimodality is concerned with several possible modes or manners in which a person learns or in which a teacher addresses his/her learners” (Hansen-Pauly *et al.* , 2009: 1).

What these authors have in common is the fact that they understand multimodality as the expression of ideas through more than one code, involving not only language but also visual components, among others. Therefore, the interaction of image and text is regarded as a working definition of multimodality in this study.

After briefly reviewing some major definitions of multimodality, and having provided a running description of its main constituents for this paper, the following subsections aim at reviewing two main theories related to the present study: the theory of reading comprehension and the model of visual composition.

3.1 Theory of reading comprehension

Among the large number of theories relating to the reading process (Alderson, 1984; Birch, 2007; Goodman, 1976; Koda, 2005), it has been chosen the Kintsch and van Dijk's *model of text comprehension* (1978) due to its great influence on the field of reading comprehension. These authors advanced a theory describing the complete reading process, to which understanding – or comprehension – is a key point. For them, understanding “involves not only the processing and interpretation of external data, but also the activation and use of internal, cognitive information” (van Dijk and Kintsch, 1983: 5). Perfetti also agrees with this definition specifying that “comprehension cannot be successful without the identification of words and the retrieval of their meanings,” (Perfetti, *et al.*, 2005: 229) which forms the first step of the model proposed by the former authors.

Kintsch and van Dijk suggested that readers build three mental representations of a text when reading: a surface structure (mainly verbal), a micro- and macro-structure, and a situational model. The first representation deals with verbal processing, which implies the identification of graphic symbols, the recognition of words, and the appreciation of the grammatical and syntactic patterns. Then, a microstructure is built in an organized way by propositions derived from the local meanings of the recognized words, followed by a macrostructure composed of the general meanings of the text as a whole. Finally, the ultimate representation is the situational model, which constitutes a mental construct about the text read. Since this construct may lack some textual details, the reader completes it with internal and cognitive information belonging to his/her personal prior knowledge. Thus, the reader interacts with the text using inferential processes in order to comprehend it.

3.2 Theory of visual composition

Gunther Kress and Theo Van Leeuwen (1996 [2006]) advanced a model to analyze all types of images, graphs, drawings, or visual elements a reader may encounter. Since their pioneering work has been recognized worldwide, it was esteemed appropriated to use such a model for the analysis of the present study. Consequently, the theory of visual composition proposes three principles: information value, salience, and framing.

Regarding information value, elements within a composition can be placed according to three patterns: the horizontal and vertical axes, and the centre-margin order. Firstly, the horizontal axis provides a disposition of elements taking into account two sides of a page: the left side is considered to be the place of the *already given* information, “something the reader is assumed to know already, as part of the culture” (2006: 180). Conversely, “the right seems to be the side of the key information, of what the reader must pay particular attention to, of the *message*” (2006: 180); hence, the right is the side of the *new* information. The authors state that the horizontal pattern is culturally driven since perception varies from culture to culture. For instance, for people who read from right to left, the right is regarded as the place of the *already given* information and the left side, the place for the *new* information.

This paper deals with the horizontal axis from the Western point of view, being the left part represented by the *already given* information and the right side portrayed by the *new* information. This left/right or given/new positioning does not happen in every composition; so the reader must adapt their reading path to the structure of each page.

Secondly, in relation to the principle of information value, the vertical axis considers the disposition of elements with regards to the top and bottom zones. In the authors’ words, “the upper section tends to make some kind of emotive appeal [while]

the lower section tends to be more informative and practical” (2006: 186). Thus, the top shows *what might be*, depicting an idealized representation of the world, whereas the bottom part is kept for *what is*, providing evidence and support for the upper representations. This dualism is also called *ideal/real* representation. Sometimes, the dichotomy is separated by a sharp line, highlighting the contrast between both parts; although some connective elements may appear to bridge the sections. Moreover, it is important to realize that directions for action usually appear in this type of structure; particularly in the case of this study since “assignments or questions in textbooks tend to be found on the lower half of the page” (2006: 186). Consequently, if an image is placed in the upper part and the text in the lower section, the former is ideologically more salient – showing a leading status – and the latter serves as a means to elaborate on the upper element. If roles were reversed, the text in the top section would have the highest status and the picture in the bottom part would provide evidence for the text. Both the horizontal and the vertical axes can be combined within the same composition, adding an extra value to the representation.

The final pattern concerning information value is the center-margin order. This representation places an element in the middle of the composition (called *center*), and the other elements around it (named *margins*). According to Kress and van Leeuwen, “for something to be presented as *center* means that it is presented as the nucleus of the information to which all the other elements are in some sense subservient” (2006: 196). This prominence of the center is common to Asian cultures since the authors argue that “the greater emphasis on hierarchy, harmony and continuity in Confucian thinking makes centering a fundamental organizational principle in [these] cultures” (2006: 195). Conversely, Western cultures tend to use more the previous patterns organized by the horizontal and vertical axes, offering a polarized representation. Hence, the center-

margin pattern can present an unequal marginal distribution of elements, allowing a combination of the *given/new* and *ideal/real* principles by arranging elements in different positions of dominance or subordination around the center. For this reason, visual space is shaped in the form of the cross, archetypal in Western cultures (see figure below extracted from Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006: 197).

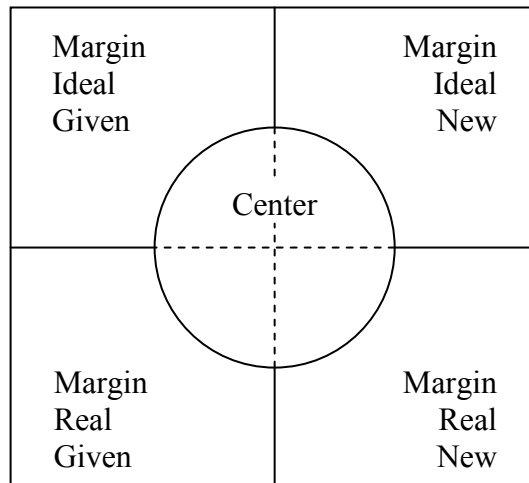


Figure 1: Dimensions of visual space.

Margins – and thus, the *given/new* and the *ideal/real* information – can become more significant or irrelevant depending on the size and prominence of the center. As Kress and van Leeuwen suggest, “even when the *center* is empty, it continues to exist *in absentia*, as the invisible (denied) pivot around which everything else turns, the place of the *divine ruler*” and they continue arguing that: “the relative infrequency of centered compositions in contemporary Western representation perhaps signifies that, in the words of the poet, *the center does not hold* any longer in many sectors of contemporary society” (2006: 197).

After having reviewed the three patterns comprising information value, the second principle of composition is *salience*. This term refers to the level of significance an element attracts to itself above others. In the authors’ words: “regardless of where [the elements of a composition] are placed, salience can create a hierarchy of

importance among the elements, selecting some as more important, more worthy of attention than others” (2006: 201). In a visual composition, elements can be judged according to several factors:

- ◆ Size: the bigger the element, the higher its salience.
- ◆ Sharpness of focus: a well-defined element stands out over a blurred one.
- ◆ Tonal contrast: elements with gradual variation of shade are less salient than element showing disparity, like black and white objects – which have a high tonal contrast.
- ◆ Color contrast: as in tonal contrast, the greater the disparity of the element’s saturation, the higher its salience.
- ◆ Perspective: “foreground objects are more salient than background objects, and elements that overlap other elements are more salient than the elements they overlap” (2006: 202).

Besides these factors, salience can be influenced as well by the culture of the viewer as regards to the appearance of the depicted element, especially if it is a human figure or a compelling cultural symbol.

Regrettably, it has not been possible to present the colored versions of the studied reading sections in this research due to budget constraints. Therefore, the upcoming analysis of the reading sections will exclude the tonal and color contrast factors explained above.

Finally, the last principle of composition is *framing*. It indicates the connection or disconnection of the elements depicted within a composition by the use of edges, like boxes to highlight certain elements. As salience, framing allows different degrees of frames, being elements weakly or strongly connected. “The stronger the framing of an element, the more it is presented as a separate unit of information” (Kress and van

Leeuwen, 2006: 203). Conversely, if the elements of a composition appear weakly connected, they will be realized as belonging together to the same unit of information. As the authors point out, besides explicit frames, there are several ways to achieve connection. On the one hand, vectors – which are oblique lines explicitly or implicitly depicted in a composition – can be used to lead the viewer’s gaze towards specific elements within the composition. On the other hand, abstract graphic elements guide the viewer’s eye from the most salient objects to the rest of the elements represented.

Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) based their theory of visual composition on Halliday’s systemic functional grammar (1985). This theory considers language as a social semiotic, regarding language at the service of social and personal needs. In the same way, Kres and van Leeuwen stress the relationship between language and composition, postulating that the abovementioned principles – information value, salience, and framing – form a system, upon which further research can be based.

Figure 2 bellow summarizes in a graphic form the three principles of composition considered in this section: information value, salience, and framing.

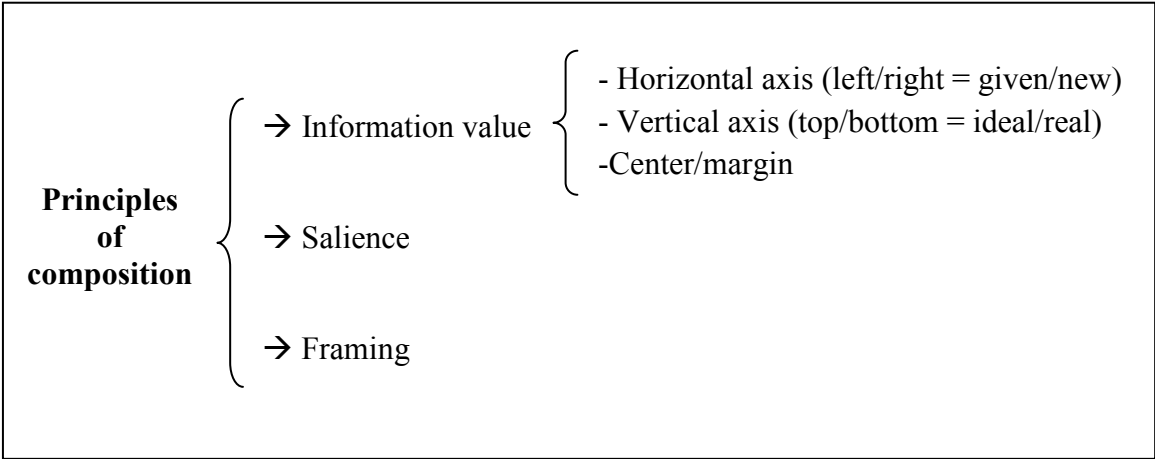


Figure 2: *Diagram of the principles of visual composition.* (Adapted from Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006: 210)

4. ANALYSIS OF DATA

The purpose of this section is to examine the selected reading materials in depth. Both the original and the modified versions – either worsened or improved – are described according to the principles proposed by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) in the multimodal theory explained in the previous section.

The analysis is presented into thematic order, beginning with the sections dealing with music, followed by those about media, and finishing with reading sections about rules or taboo issues. A small reproduction of the textbook's reading section has been provided within the body of the analysis in order to facilitate the comparison between the original and the modified versions. For a detailed view of the images, see appendix one.

4.1 Qualitative analysis of reading section 1



Figure 3: Reading section 1, original (left) and modified (right) versions.

The original version of this reading section constitutes a well-designed textbook page in terms of the principles stated by Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) visual composition

theory. This version is arranged around the vertical axis since there are three evident parts within the page: the upper zone shows a pre-reading exercise on the left side and three images on the right side. These salient images form a bridge between the upper section and the middle one, connecting both parts. The middle section is comprised of the text, which is also framed and placed in the middle of the page to gather the reader's attention. These sections belong to the *ideal* representation of the world, proposed by the multimodal theory, because they depict top experiences – like a concert – appealing thus to the emotive side of the reader. Conversely, the lower zone belongs to the *real* world since it is where students need to make a contribution by doing the proposed exercises. In this section, the required comprehension exercise calls for students' answers to short questions. Besides, exercises in this *down-to-earth* zone are clearly divided and set apart from the previous sections by a sharp line corresponding to the lower side of the frame where the text is enclosed.

The modified version of the same reading section – placed on the right side – has been altered in order to impoverish student's reading comprehension, given the well-designed original version. The vertical layout was modified by reversing the *ideal/real* order. Consequently, elements comprising the *real* zone were rearranged in the upper section while those involved within the *ideal* area were placed in the lower part of the page. Both pre-reading and post-reading exercises have been located in the upper part since they are considered to belong to the *real* order. Images, on the contrary, have been reduced and placed at the lower section of the page since they are believed to form part of the *ideal* order. They are no longer salient nor connected to the text. The sole elements that remain unchanged are the pre-reading activity, situated together with the rest of the exercises in the modified version, and the framed text which has been left in

the middle of the page as a remainder of its significance. In brief, changes intended to create a confrontation between the *ideal* and *real* representations.

4.2 Qualitative analysis of reading section 2



Figure 4: reading section 2, original (left) and modified (right) versions.

The original version of the second reading section is a mixture of both horizontally and vertically oriented representations. On the one hand, the horizontal orientation can be explained because of the placement of elements in two kinds of columns: the left one, representing the side of the *given* information whereas the right part corresponds to the place for the *new* information. However, there is not such a distinction between *given/new* information on this page since texts are framed individually, offering a disconnected layout. On the other hand, the vertical orientation is recognizable because the page presents the images as belonging to the *ideal* world, followed by the text in the middle part, and the post-reading exercise at the bottom section, as in the previous original version. The post-reading activity requires students to compare and link information read in the text. Moreover, due to the big size of the images placed in the upper section and the sharp focus of both images and individual texts, the disposition of the page as a whole is not as well-designed as the previous original one. Therefore, the changes made to the original version tried to improve it.

The modified version of the second reading section has followed mainly the vertical orientation, trying to keep too the horizontal orientation, conveyed through the distribution of elements in two columns. The *ideal* zone corresponds to the images of the singers, which have been slightly reduced to concede a higher impact to the texts. However, images' sharp focus was kept because it was necessary for images to remain salient, given their closed connection to the texts. The middle section places the individual texts – framed all together – in the centre of the page so as to highlight the most important part of the reading section: the text. Besides, they have been displayed in a “grid” form trying to preserve both their initial independent nature and their distribution in two columns. The *real* area represents the place for learners to contribute and interact with the text by doing the exercises, which have been grouped as pre-reading activities – placed on the left side as a kind of *given* information –, and the post-reading task – positioned on the right part of the page as the *new* information which students need to complete. An additional element has been changed from its original place: the line separating exercises from texts, which were originally divided by two texts – has been relocated as the exercises' heading. This element creates a well-defined, separate space for activities contributing to their placement within the *down-to-earth* zone.

After having considered the reading sections dealing with the topic of music, the following two subsections describe a different one. Readings about media will be portrayed now in their original and modified versions.

4.3 Qualitative analysis of reading section 3



Figure 5: reading section 3, original (left) and modified (right) versions.

The original version of this reading section is organized in terms of the vertical axis because two recognizable sections can be identified. The first one corresponds to the *ideal* zone and it is comprised of two pre-reading exercises on the left side, and three images on the right part. These images show their salience by overlapping one another given their prominent size. They have also the function of bridging the *ideal* and the *real* zones of the page. The second section identified on the page corresponds to the *real* area, which is located at the bottom part of the layout. In this area, the reading text is framed to focus learners' attention towards the text. Finally, the post-reading exercise asks students for understanding by means of true/false statements. The weakness that makes this page not well-designed from the visual composition theory's point of view remains in the disconnection of the post-reading exercise since it is placed on a separate page. Accordingly, this individual placement may provide ground for confusion since it may diminish the relationship between the activity and the text.

The modified version of this reading section intends to better position its elements, following the vertical orientation that the section originally encompassed. Firstly, pre-reading exercises were divided, given the more individual nature of the first one, and the dual disposition of the second activity. In addition, images were kept in both their overlapping and bridging roles, but reduced to some extent in order to have the text centred within the page. The reason to have the text in the middle zone of the layout relies on the significance that this position has according to the *ideal/real* order since elements conveying emotive contributions should be placed in the upper part, while objects depicting *down-to-earth* actions should be located in the lower part of the composition (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006). Hence, the text relates these two ends acting as an intermediate element thanks to its frame, which divides the upper from the lower parts. The last change applied to this reading section consisted in placing the remaining pre-reading and post-reading exercises within the *down-to-earth* area, so as students could easily identify where was their contributions required.

4.4 Qualitative analysis of reading section 4



Figure 6: reading section 4, original (left) and modified (right) versions.

The original version of the fourth reading section shows another vertical arrangement of elements around this axis. The depiction of a large size image becomes the most salient element of the composition within the *ideal* zone. Less attention is given to the speaking exercises located on the upper left corner. The representation of these elements is separated from the actual reading section by a line, making them seem disconnected from the text. Regarding the reading section, the framed text constitutes the most salient element in the whole composition thanks to the high contrast of the dark background in relation to the white writing. Moreover, a horizontal orientation of the text is appreciated due to its division in two columns, which follows the *given / new* order when reading the text. A drawback should be acknowledged since the text's summary is also divided in two columns without further division from its body. This situation creates the feeling that the summary does not exist, generating a raise of preliminary confusion. Apart from this drawback, another downside is the placement of exercises on the following page, which augment the disconnection between the text and its activities. The post-reading exercises included in this section comprise the understanding of the text by identifying and classifying some aspects from the text.

The modified version of this reading section tries to improve its layout by making prominent a single element in order to focus learners' attention. The first modification was to reduce the size of the image and to incorporate it within the text's frame so as to be connected with the reading section. At the same time, the speaking activity was eliminated because attention to the development of this skill deserves an independent study. Afterwards, the summary was placed in a single column to better orient students in their starting reading process. At the end, exercises were located at the bottom part of the page, as corresponds to the *real* world, where students need to make contributions. Thus, the vertical as well as the horizontal axes were maintained.

4.5 Qualitative analysis of reading section 5

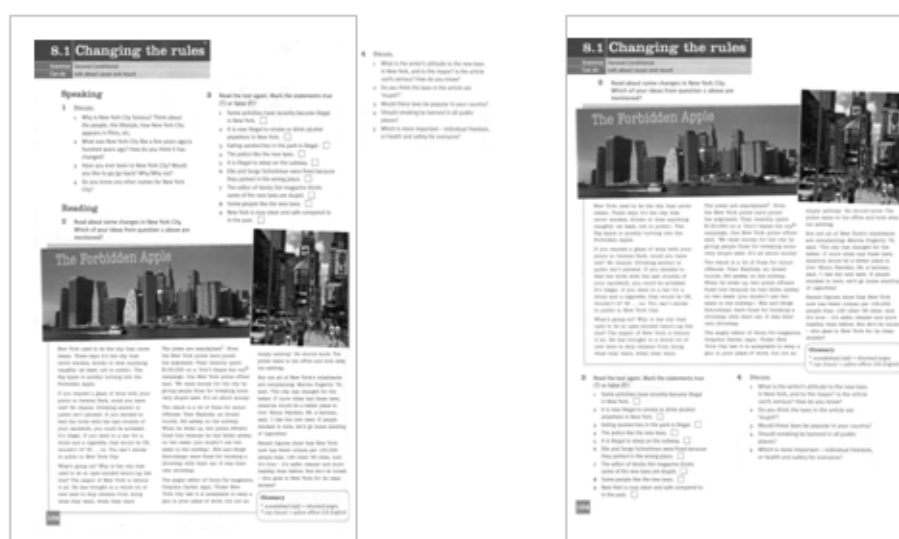


Figure 7: reading section 5, original (left) and modified (right) versions.

The original version of the present reading section is arranged around the vertical axis as well. The *ideal* zone, which is also represented in a horizontally oriented approach, includes a speaking task on the left side – the *given* information –, and the post-reading exercise on the right side – the *new* information, what students need to contribute to. The *real* zone depicts the framed text which includes two salient, rotated images serving as a bridge to the previous section. The weakness of this layout relies on the separate exercise that remains on the following page. As already mentioned, the disadvantage of having contents on an extra page provides less connection between the elements of a composition. Hence, some changes were performed in an attempt to improve this reading section.

The modified version of the fifth reading section maintains the vertical orientation and the special attention conferred to the framed text and the images. These elements were placed towards the *ideal* zone, centring the text in the middle of the page to preserve its importance within the reading section. Furthermore, post-reading exercises were rearranged at the bottom part of the page, to be closer to the *real* world.

4.6 Qualitative analysis of reading section 6

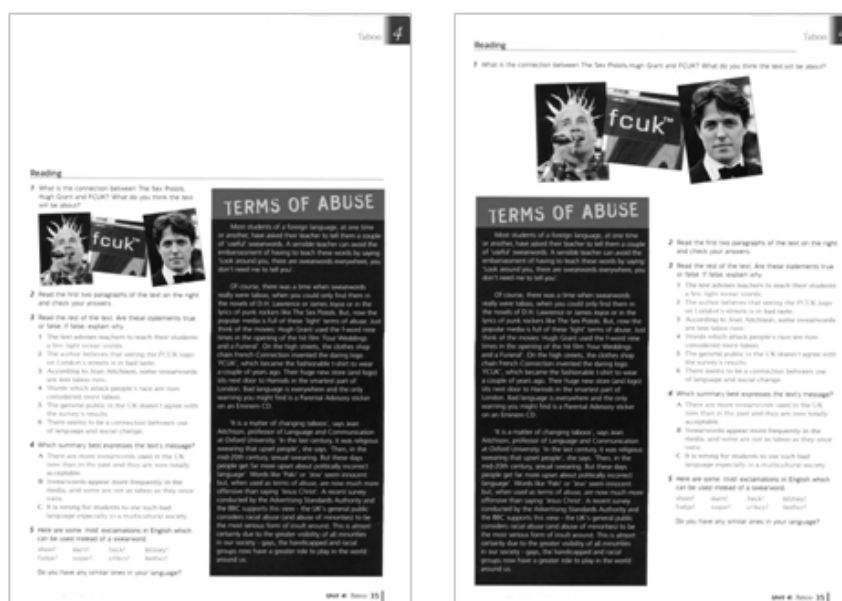


Figure 8: reading section 6, original (left) and modified (right) versions.

The original version of the last reading section analyzed presents its elements according to the horizontal orientation. This pattern is easily observed due to the representation of the elements in two columns. Since the left side is the place for the *given* information, and the right side the place for the *new* one, this layout seems to be arranged inversely: the original version gives the impression of assuming that students are already familiarized with the habit of doing exercises; hence, the left side is devoted to the placement of activities. These exercises seek comprehension by identifying true/false sentences. Besides, the images appearing on this side are not prominent because their size is relatively small and they are located in the place of the *already known* information. On the contrary, what is *new* information has been placed on the right side; thus, it is considered that the text belongs to the kind of information learners should acquire. Furthermore, the text is the most salient element taking an overall impression due to its frame and its high contrast of dark background and white writing.

The modified version of the last reading section examined attempts to distribute the elements of the page in the reverse way that they were depicted in the original version. This reverse order follows the horizontal orientation. Accordingly, the framed text was placed on the left side since students already know that they need to read a text within the reading section. Exercises were relocated on the right side because they are considered to be new for students. Finally, images were given a central place and a larger size so as to increase their prominence.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section provides an overview of the findings in each reading section after having distributed the original and modified versions to students and having corrected its attached comprehension exercises. The results were gathered by comparing the number of correct answers students produced in both versions.

In order to discuss the findings, the information collected from the exercises' correction will be presented in the form of bar graphics to better compare the results within each reading section.

5.1 Results and discussion of reading section 1

The first reading section was considered a well-designed page according to the principles of Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) visual composition theory. Hence, the modified version intended to impoverish students' comprehension by inverting the order of the information presented – in this case, exercises were placed in the upper zone belonging to the *ideal* world, and images in the lower part corresponding to the *real* world. The text was kept framed in the middle of the page as the most important element of the composition.

Comparing participants' answers of both the original and the modified versions of this reading section, it was realized that no variation is perceived between both versions. This result can be appreciated in figure 9 below:

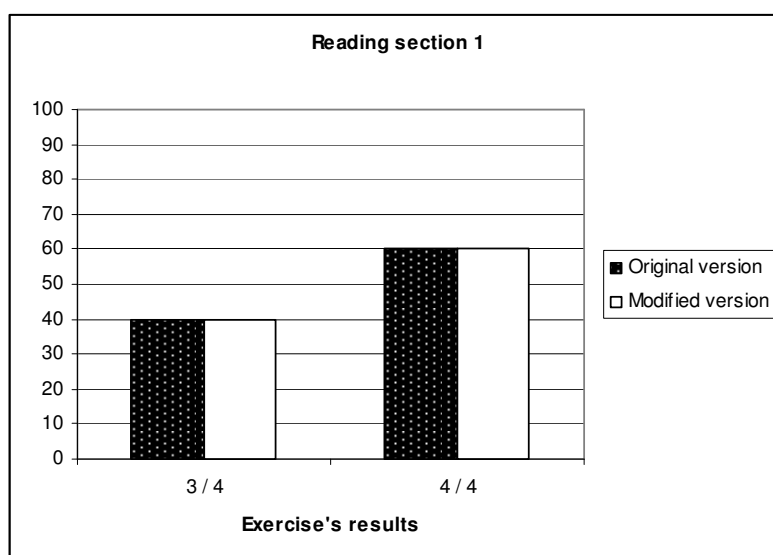


Figure 9: Results from reading section 1.

As can be seen from the figure, participants performed equally on the number of correct answers, from a total of four possible responses. None of the students obtained less than three points on either the original or the modified version. Despite the changes made in the modified version to worsen student' comprehension, no difference was observed in their results.

Against the initial expectations, some reasons may affect the students' equivalent performance. One possible reason could be that the accomplished modifications were not drastic since the text continued to be the most important element of the composition, given its frame and middle position. The fact that images in the modified version did not bridge the upper text did not represent a drawback for comprehension because images were not essential to understand the text's meaning. Another reason could be the easiness of the text and the low complexity of the comprehension exercise². The text utilized simple forms to address the contents to the reader. At the same time, the comprehension exercise required a general understanding of the text without demanding specific information. Nevertheless, this page constitutes an exception considering the remaining reading sections.

² The exercise consisted in answering some questions about the general sense of the text. The ease of the question provided a hint for response.

5.2 Results and discussion of reading section 2

From the point of view of the visual composition, it was believed that the layout of this page needed improvement since it encompassed a mixture of horizontal and vertical orientations. Besides, it presented the text in independent frames showing a clear disconnection between elements. The intention of the modified version was to improve its layout. The main changes carried out were unifying the text while keeping its independent structure, and placing the images and the exercises in their respectively places according to the vertical axis: *ideal* world – images – in the upper part, and *real* world – exercises – in the lower part of the page.

Looking at the underneath figure, no changes are realized, regardless of the employed version:

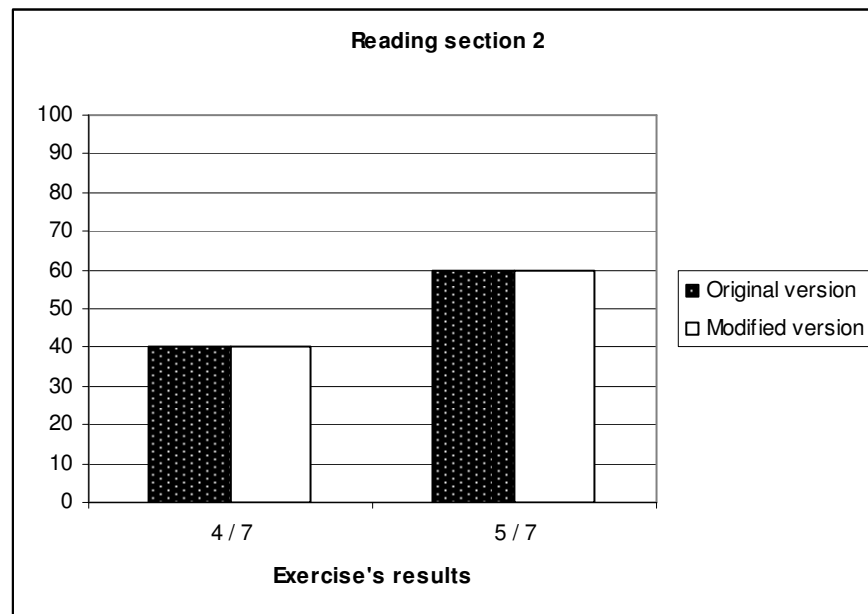


Figure 10: Results from reading section 2.

Figure 10 shows an identical representation to the previous graph because participants achieved the same punctuations within the original and modified versions. The difference stems from the total number of correct answers the required comprehension

exercise had: a maximum of seven correct responses. Students obtained no less than four points and no more than six points on both versions. The results of the modified version correlate the ones attained from the original page.

The possible reasons explaining this repeated phenomenon could be various. The major reason may be associated to the high degree of text independency depicted in the layout. Since the text does not act as a unified whole, the fact of joining it together in the modified version did not assist students' comprehension. Moreover, exercises were located next to each other in the lower section, placing together speaking – or pre-reading tasks – with post-reading activities. This grouping of elements was not as effective as it was thought of because it forced students to rearrange mentally the reading path of the page. The original version placed the speaking – or pre-reading – activities separately from the post-reading exercise, locating the former before the text and the latter after it. An additional reason could be the moderate difficulty of the post-reading exercise itself. This activity entailed a comparison of the information read in the text and a classification of it according to the given statements. Both comprehension and chance may have affected the results on this exercise. For instance, if a student does not know the corresponding text which a statement is associated to, s/he could write one randomly.

Although this reading section and the previous one represent the contrary patterns of representation stated by the visual composition, they seem to be the exceptions that prove the rule since the remaining layouts examined confirm the initial hypothesis.

5.3 Results and discussion of reading section 3

The present reading section was believed to be a weak devised page in terms of the composition theory. Even though the representation is well organized around the vertical axis, its main downside is represented by the separation of the post-reading activity on a different page. This disconnection may diminish the relationship between the activity and the text, obscuring comprehension. The modified version tried to re-establish the connection of the activity with the text by placing the post-reading exercise in the lower part of the page, centering the framed text, and decreasing the size of the images to make the text the most prominent element.

The subsequent graph shows the students' results of the post-reading exercise:

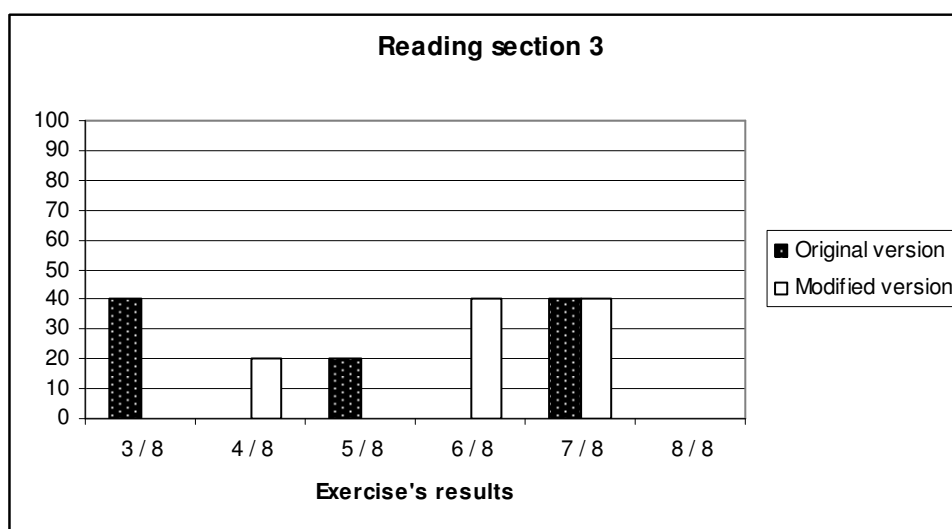


Figure 11: Results from reading section 3.

From figure 11, it can be estimated that there was an improvement in the number of corrected answers students made in the post-reading exercise. From a total of eight possible responses, students obtained a minimum of three points and a maximum of seven. In the graph, the bars symbolizing the original version of the layout illustrate a distribution of results threefold: the majority of correct answers fall over the columns of three and seven correct responses respectively; the remaining bar sets results on the five

correct answers column. From the point of view of the modified version, the majority of results are concentrated in the six and seven correct responses. Thus, the modifications performed to the reading section convey a slight increase of students' comprehension.

5.4 Results and discussion of reading section 4

The fourth reading section was not considered a well-planned page following Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) theory. The original version presented a combination of the speaking and reading sections, providing the post-reading exercises separately. This disconnected arrangement divided the link of the text with the activities diminishing comprehension at the same time. The purpose of the modified version was to connect the text and its exercises on a single page, framing the accompanying image with the text, and creating an area in the lower part for the activities.

The following figure illustrates the results of the two post-reading exercises belonging to this reading section:

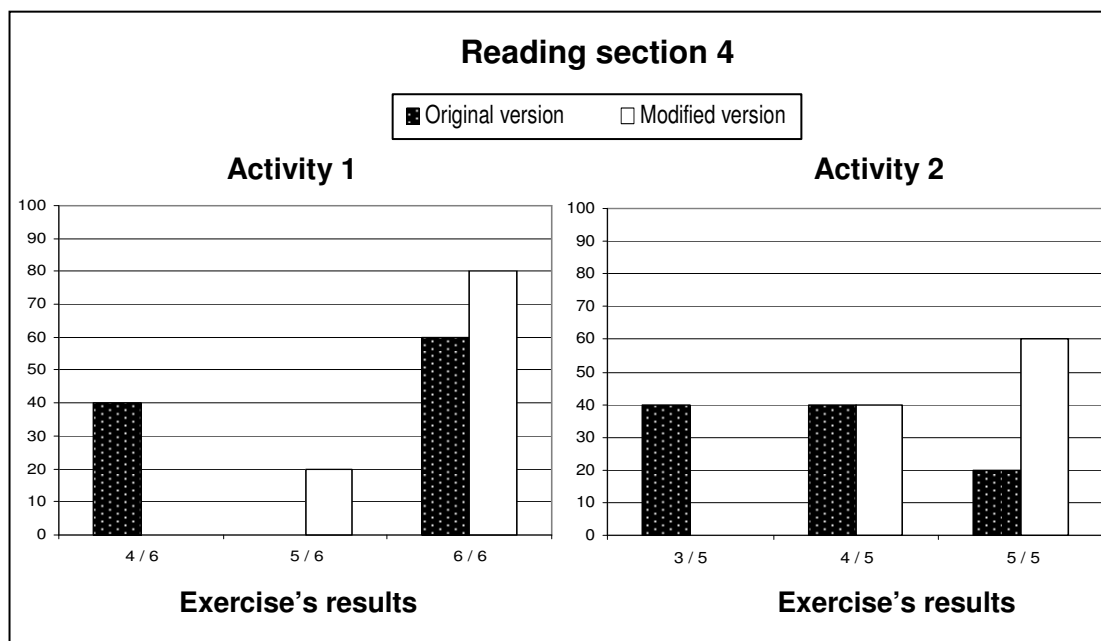


Figure 12: Results from reading section 4.

As can be observed from the preceding graph, there is an increasing growth in the number of correct answers students obtain in both comprehension activities. For the first one, a maximum of six responses could be attained. Students' results from both original and modified versions of this first post-reading activity were not inferior to four correct answers. Besides, the utmost number of correct responses – 6/6 – acquired the highest punctuation in both versions; however, results from the modified layout achieved a greater distance than those from the original one. Regarding the second comprehension activity, a total of five responses were accounted, being three the minimum number of correct answers. In this graph, results are more spread out. The original version shows a steady tendency of suitable responses for three to four correct answers, but it decreases for the maximum number of responses. On the contrary, the modified version proves a growing amount of suitable responses when the number of correct answers increases. Therefore, the modified version of this reading section confirms the positive influence that a well-designed layout has for comprehension.

5.5 Results and discussion of reading section 5

This reading section constituted a weakly designed layout according to the principles of visual composition. As in the aforementioned discussion of the third reading section, the distribution of elements within this composition is organized around the vertical axis in an appropriate way. Nevertheless, the main drawback is the placement of exercises on the subsequent page, which interferes with the reader's comprehension. The modified version aimed to create a connected reading section placing its elements on a sole page. The changes made to implement this objective followed the vertical orientation and consisted in eliminating first the speaking activity so as to gather attention uniquely to the reading section, relocating the images and the text in the upper and middle zones respectively, and placing the post-reading exercises at the bottom part of the page.

Figure 13 below shows students' results regarding the fifth reading section:

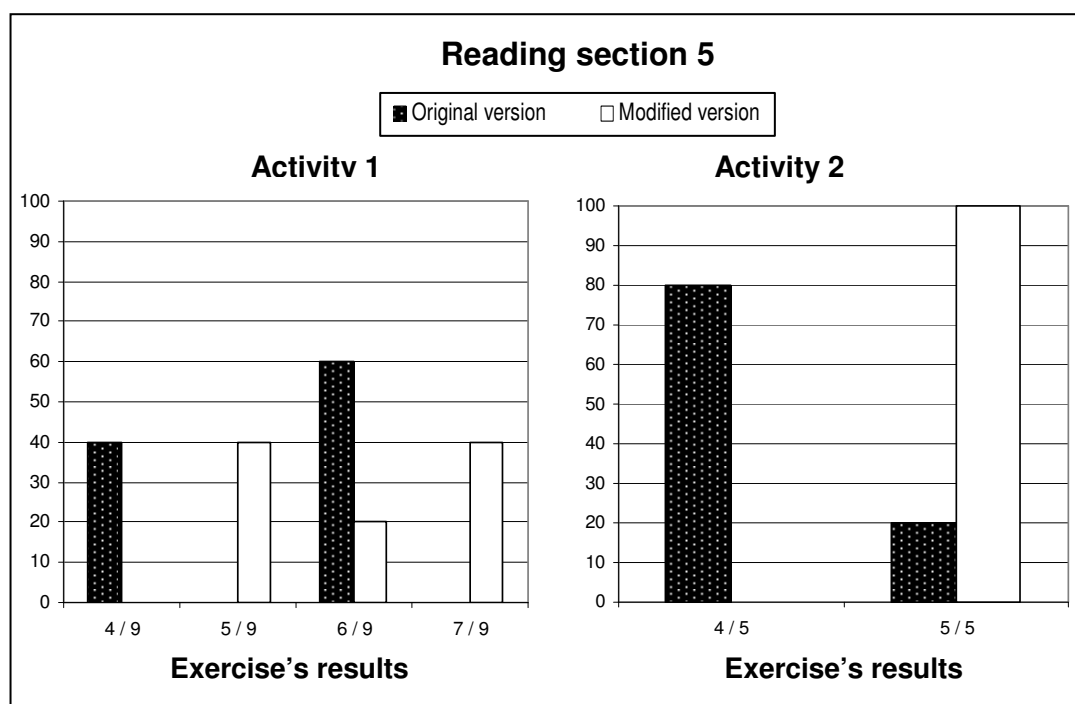


Figure 13: Results from reading section 5.

In the upper graph, it is appreciated in general terms a large number of correct answers belonging to the modified version of the reading comprehension. The first activity contained a total of nine possible answers, from which the minimum obtained by students was four and the maximum seven. The layout of the original version affected students' responses involving an average of four or six correct replies. The modified version placed its effect on the responses of five to seven correct answers, which is another evidence for the support provided by this version. Alternatively, the second activity comprised a total of five answers, being four the minimum achieved by students. The above right side graph illustrates a curious phenomenon: almost all students taking the original reading section obtained the majority of results within the category of four corrected answers. However, students taking the modified version obtained all their results in the highest category, having all answers accurate. This fact can be explained by the nature of the exercise itself. This activity corresponds to a discussion task about

the article's overall intention and the reader's opinion of what is stated in the text. Hence, the fact that this exercise is connected to the reading section seems to aid students' activation of the former reading passage, producing a positive effect on comprehension.

5.6 Results and discussion of reading section 6

The final reading section follows the horizontal orientation proposed by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006). Nonetheless, it is thought to be represented in the reverse order since the *given* information – usually placed at the left side – is depicted on the right side, and the opposite occurs with the *new* information. For this reason, the objective of the modified reading section was to rearrange the elements according to the principles stated by these authors. Consequently, the text was placed on the left side, moving the exercises to the right part, and locating above these elements a high salient set of images relating to the reading section.

The successive graphs show the results from the exercises of this section:

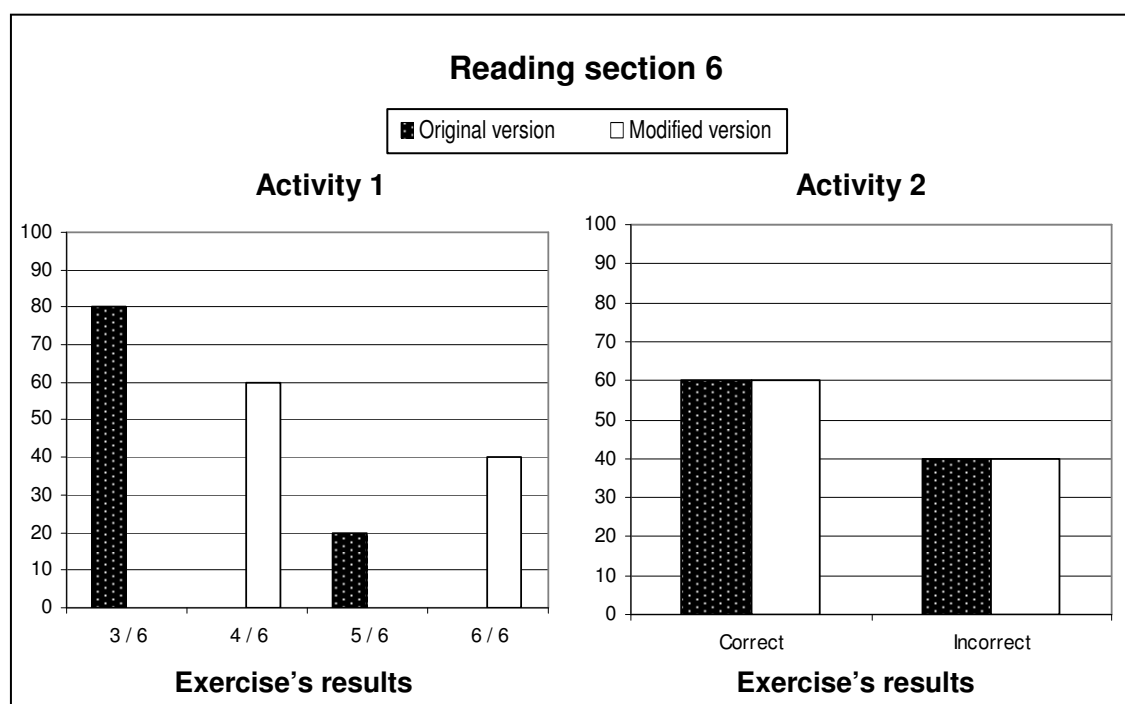


Figure 14: Results from reading section 6.

As can be appreciated from figure 14, the left side graph shows that the total number of correct answers made through the modified version of the reading section is reasonably superior to those produced through the original version. On the right side of the figure, a double parallelism is observed between both versions of the reading section analyzed. For the first activity, results ranged from a minimum of three to a maximum of six correct answers. The original reading section encompassed the categories of three and five correct answers. Conversely, the modified version takes the four and six correct answers categories, illustrating the positive effect on comprehension that the rearranged reading section elements have. For the second activity, the number of correct answers of both versions exceeds the number of incorrect responses, estimating that comprehension was successful.

6. CONCLUSION

This dissertation has aimed at investigating the role of multimodality within reading comprehension in English as a foreign language, by analyzing six reading sections from two general, intermediate level textbooks. The instrument used for the analysis was Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) theory of visual composition which states three principles of visual design: information value, salience, and framing. An in-depth examination of the reading sections was carried out to determine the different aspects encompassing layouts and the most predominating ones. In addition, this study has centered its attention on the estimation of patterns seeking to improve or impoverish students' reading comprehension.

The results gathered from the analysis and the comparison of students' performance on the above mentioned reading sections have led this investigation to reach the following conclusions concerning the initial research questions, which will be repeated here for the sake of clarity:

1. What kind of visual compositions do textbooks examined in this study include in their reading sections? Can any different types be distinguished? Is there any predominating one?

Textbooks examined in this study include – to a large or a lesser extent – the three principles of visual composition. Concretely, horizontal and vertical orientation layouts were the most common patterns to depict elements, since all instances analyzed were represented around these axes. No cases were accounted for the center-margin order since it is not frequent in Western cultures.

2. What are the most recurrent visual aspects employed within the analyzed sections – information value, salience, or framing?

The most recurrent visual aspects within the analyzed sections are the arrangements around the vertical axis, and the preference for frames and salient images to gather the reader's attention.

3. Does the design of the selected reading sections enhance or worsen students' comprehension?

The design of the selected reading sections shows in a broad sense significant correlations with a stronger performance on comprehension exercises. Nevertheless, two exceptions were reported, derived from several possible variables like complexity of the text, or type of exercise required.

In essence, the findings of this study have reached the same conclusion as Domínguez and Maíz's (2010) main outcome: "multimodality does play a significant role in students' degree of performance" (2010: 108). This assertion can be applied to the sphere of reading comprehension since it is believed that visual elements help the reader "visualize" the message conveyed by the author.

However, this research involves some limitations mainly regarding the limited size of the sample analyzed and the heavy time constraints. A major drawback was the unfeasibility of reproducing the colored versions of the reading sections examined, although every possible effort has been made to ensure an accurate description of this aspect and its effects on composition within the analysis section. Hence, it seems difficult to reach further generalizations. In spite of these restrictions, the present dissertation could be taken as a basis to develop similar studies.

Besides the reference to color in the analysis of data, a possible departing point for future consideration is the role of multimodality concerning different stages of foreign language learning, or the degree of influence that visual elements have on the message's comprehension by native speakers. It would also be interesting to implement the multimodal theory on diverse contexts like multimedia environments, or distance-learning courses.

All in all, the author of this study believes in the potential of multimodality as a clear way to enrich communication by the image-text interaction. After all, as the common saying claims: *an image is worth a thousand words*.

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8. APPENDIX 1

Reading section 1: original version

8.2

Reading

- 7 a Describe the photos and write down the following:
- three things you know about the Live 8/Live Aid concerts.
 - three things you would like to know about the Live 8/Live Aid concerts (write questions).
- b Read the text to find out/check your information. Compare your information with a partner.



3 July 2005

**'Are you ready to start a revolution?
Are you ready to change history?' ...**

These were the words of Madonna as she walked onto the stage of the London Live 8 concert. On 3rd July 2005, Live 8 concerts were held in ten cities around the globe. The idea was to highlight the problem of poverty in Africa. Hundreds of millions of people around the world watched the concerts on their televisions. But how did this all start?

The day that rock and roll really changed the world was twenty years earlier, on 13 July 1985, and all because of one man, Bob Geldof. On that day more than a billion and a half people around the world united together to watch the biggest rock concert ever held – Live Aid.

30 million people were suffering in a terrible famine in sub-Saharan Africa. It was an event so completely shocking – happening on our television screens, with children dying in front of our eyes – that it moved everyone who saw it. The concert raised £140 million.

Live Aid was a miracle – technologically, emotionally and politically. It is difficult now to understand what an amazing achievement it was to broadcast the first live,

all-day, multi-artist concert to the whole world. In 1985 there were no mobile phones and hardly any fax machines. In many countries international phone calls usually had to be booked, sometimes hours in advance. Computers were outside the experience of most ordinary people. Email was a future dream.

Yet surprisingly, simultaneous concerts on two continents were co-ordinated. Global television schedules were cleared. Concorde was put on stand-by. Even the Space Shuttle astronauts lined up to make a contribution. Live Aid started new ways of thinking and behaving – in broadcasting, in putting political pressure on governments and in raising money. Nowadays, these have become normal as more and more charities regularly use music as an instrument for change.

Bob Geldof, the organiser of Live Aid and Live 8, saw an opportunity. He wanted to make governments and people do something important to change the terrible situation. He used what he says is 'the lingua franca of the planet – not English but rock 'n' roll', and it was a fantastic success.

Live Aid was one of the first indications that we now lived in a globalised world. Interestingly, its language was music, and the message it delivered so loudly and clearly was of the need for change.

- 8 What is the significance of the following words/phrases/numbers. Tell a partner.

one and a half billion people famine
£140 million a miracle mobile phones/
computers ten the lingua franca
new ways of thinking the need for change
simultaneous concerts put on stand-by

- 9 Answer the questions with a partner.

- Do you think Live Aid and Live 8 were successful?
- Have you heard of or been to other charity events or concerts? What did you think of them?
- If you organised a concert like this, what would you raise the money for? Why?
- Do you agree that 'music is an instrument for change'?

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Reading section 2: original version



Speaking & Reading

- 1 Look at the photos of these cultural icons. What kind of music were they famous for?
- 2 Name the four different objects. Connect them to each of the four singers. Give reasons for your choice.
- 3 Read the biographies and connect them to each singer.

A

Born in Tupelo, Mississippi. Made more than 30 films. Interrupted his career to serve in the army. His music was a synthesis of rhythm-and-blues and country-and-western that was for a while described as 'rockabilly'. His first record, 'Heartbreak Hotel', made an immediate impression on local listeners, who were amazed to learn that he was white. His music signalled the beginnings of rock & roll, making him a national sensation in the 1950s, while his pelvic gyrations on TV were considered so scandalous that he was shown only from the waist up. **Trademark:** blue suede shoes. **Died at the age of 42 after serious health problems.**

B

Born in Baltimore, 1915, to terrible poverty. Biographical information is confused; some sources say she was jailed for prostitution at the age of 13. Began working in nightclubs as a jazz singer, and found she could bring customers to tears with her uniquely melancholic singing style. Most famous songs: 'Lover Man' and 'Strange Fruit', which was originally banned. She was taken advantage of by her record companies who never paid her any royalties. **Nickname:** Lady Day. **Trademark:** white gardenias in her hair. **Died at the age of 43 after serious addiction to drugs and drink.**

- 4 Who do the sentences below refer to?

In some cases, two answers may be correct.

- 1 Some details of his / her biography are confused.
- 2 He / She had a violent death.
- 3 His / Her music has had a political influence.
- 4 He / She pioneered a whole different type of music.
- 5 He / She sang in an unusual way.
- 6 His / Her music represented a reaction against traditional values.
- 7 He / She sang protest songs.



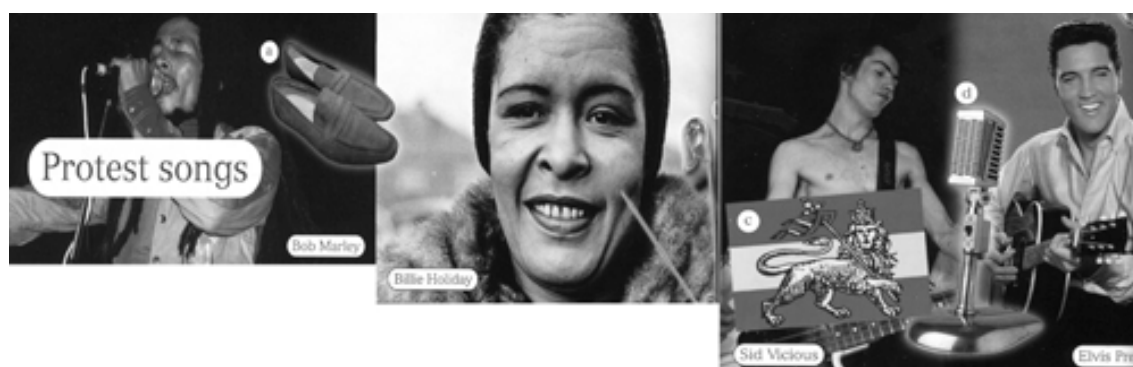
C

Born in London in 1957. Joined punk rock group 'The Sex Pistols' despite not knowing how to play the bass guitar. The group represented rebellion, and street anarchy at the time of the Queen's Silver Jubilee in the UK. Sid was the most violent member of the band, cutting himself on stage and starting fights on their tours. Most famous song: an extraordinary, punk and out-of-tune version of Frank Sinatra's 'My Way'. It is said that Vicious murdered his girlfriend Nancy Spungen in a New York hotel room. No one knows if he committed suicide or died of a drug overdose, but he was only 21 when he died. **Trademark:** safety pin in nose and leather jacket.

D

Born in Jamaica in 1945. His band, 'The Wailers', were the first group to bring Jamaican music to the world's attention. Famous songs include 'No Woman, No Cry', 'I shot the sheriff' and 'One Love', which all have become anthems of peace in a world of political and racial conflict. He became the first pop success from the so-called developing world. One of his most famous achievements was playing the 'One Love Peace Concert' in Kingston, bringing together the two leaders of Jamaica's rival political parties in peace. **Trademark:** dreadlocks and colours of Jamaican flag. **He died of cancer in Miami in 1981.**

Reading section 2: modified version



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Reading section 3: original version

2.1 Media first

Grammar	the passive
Can do	give opinions and agree/disagree

Speaking and reading

1 Discuss.

- 1 In what order were the things in the box invented? (See page 145 for answers.)
- 2 Which of them have been the most important for a) the world? b) you personally? and c) your country?

TV newspapers the Internet radio video

2 a Do the quiz in pairs.

- 1 What is the world's most popular reality TV show?
- 2 Which country makes the most films?
- 3 Which search engine is the most popular?
- 4 Which film is often voted the greatest ever?
- 5 Which quiz show is the most popular?
- 6 Which country watches most TV?
- 7 Which newspaper sells the most copies?

b Read the text to check your answers.



ON TOP OF THE MEDIA

'The mass media is a combination of information, entertainment and complete rubbish.' D. Yandell

You may or may not agree with psychologist David Yandell, but most people agree that the media has one key characteristic: it keeps growing and growing. These days, few people can remember life before television. And most of us have been influenced by the constant flow of words and images from screens or newspapers. Some of it is 'complete rubbish' and some of it is wonderful. Here are some of the 'firsts' and 'bests' of the media world.

The No.1 reality TV show: *Big Brother*. Like it or not, *Big Brother* is the most popular show of its kind. It was first shown in Holland in 1999 and it has been broadcast in over twenty countries.

The No.1 film industry: the Indian film industry (nicknamed Bollywood). More films are made in India than in any other country.

The No.1 search engine: Google. Lots of information can be found by searching Google. In fact, it is used for over 250 million searches in 182 languages every day. It was named after Googol, which is the number represented by one + one hundred zeros.

The No.1 film: *Citizen Kane*. In lists of great films it usually comes first. It was made by Orson Welles in 1941 and tells the story of a media tycoon*.

The No.1 quiz show of recent years: *Who wants to be a millionaire?* It started in the UK in 1998 but has now been broadcast all over the world.

The No.1 TV addicts: The US has 805 televisions per 1,000 people, the world's highest number, and in the US they watch TV the most. By the age of sixty-five the average US citizen has spent nine years in front of the TV.

The No.1 selling newspaper: *Yomiuri Shimbun*. It sells ten million copies a day in Japan.

And some firsts ...

- The TV was invented by John Logie Baird. He gave the first public demonstration in 1926.
- Ten years later there were still only 100 TV sets in the world.
- The first TV 'ad' was for a clock, in New York in 1941. They paid nine dollars for the ad.
- The first video recorder (1956) was 1.1 metres high and weighed 665 kilograms, as much as a small car.

Glossary

* media tycoon = a person who owns newspapers, TV stations, etc. They are rich and powerful.

3 a Read the text again and mark the sentences true (T), false (F) or no information (NI).

- 1 According to the article, most people think the media contains a lot of rubbish. ☐
- 2 People in Holland didn't like *Big Brother*. ☐
- 3 Googol is a number. ☐
- 4 Orson Welles was a media tycoon. ☐
- 5 *Who wants to be a millionaire?* is the most popular quiz show in history. ☐
- 6 Americans watch more TV than any other nationality. ☐
- 7 *Yomiuri Shimbun* is a daily newspaper. ☐
- 8 The first ever TV ad was very successful. ☐

b Tick (✓) any information in the text that you already knew. Write (!) if you were surprised by the information. Compare with a partner.

Reading section 3: modified version

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Grammar	the passive
Can do	give opinions and agree/disagree

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- Americans watch more TV than any other nationality. ☐
- Yomiuri Shimbun* is a daily newspaper. ☐
- The first ever TV ad was very successful. ☐

b Tick (✓) any information in the text that you already knew. Write (!) if you were surprised by the information. Compare with a partner.

Reading section 4: original version

Interactive TV

Speaking

1 How much do you know about reality TV? Can you identify the programme in the photo?

2 Answer these questions with your partner.

- 1 What reality TV shows do you know / watch?
- 2 Look at the titles of the new reality TV shows in the texts. What do think they are about?

3 Read the texts and check your answers.



Reading

Reality TV is here to stay

It all started in the early 90s with 'The Real World' on MTV. Then, reality TV invaded homes around the world in 2001 with 'Big Brother', 'Fame Academy' and the rest. Now, you would think that TV companies would be pulling

A

Wife Swap, Italy

Contestants exchange husbands / wives and boyfriends / girlfriends for two weeks with often explosive results. Camera crews film their every move at their respective homes and the audience votes on the best and the worst of the new couples.

B

Pop Idol, South America

Already a huge hit in the United States, this Latin American version of reality TV's most famous programme – it's called Operación Triunfo in Spain and Fame Academy in the UK – transforms everyday people into pop stars. Audiences vote for who should be eliminated from the competition each week.

C

EE Swag, UK EE

Members of the public are tempted into committing illegal acts. Hidden cameras film people's responses to temptation. In the show, luxury cars are left unlocked in bad neighbourhoods, windows are left open and wallets are dropped on streets.

the plugs on the interactive programme format. But there's plenty more to come. In fact, producers are trying to come up with new ideas all the time ... Here's a look at new reality shows from around the world:

D

I'm a Celebrity ... Get me out of here!, UK

In this show, seven celebrities are taken to a mysterious and remote destination for two weeks. Every day, one of the celebrities has to do a task to get food for the group, such as swimming through shark-infested waters. The public have to vote for which celebrity should do the task and then who should be eliminated.

E

Man vs Beast, USA

Teams of people and animals compete in crazy sporting events. The unlikely contestants have included a team of midgeys versus an elephant to see who can pull an aeroplane across a desert; a human hot-dog-eating champion competing against a bear; and a world class sprinter trying to beat a giraffe and a zebra in a race.

F

Faking It, UK

Ten people's lives are transformed as they spend an intensive four-week coaching programme doing something completely different from their real jobs: becoming, for example, TV directors, DJs or photographers. Each faker has to look right, speak right and do their new jobs well enough to fool a panel of expert judges.

1 Which of the programmes (A-F) include the following characteristics? (Two or more programmes can apply to each question.)

- 1 TV audience participation
- 2 competition between different partners
- 3 famous people
- 4 people doing things they wouldn't normally do
- 5 intensive training and coaching
- 6 temptations

2 Match these remaining sentences with texts A-F. Where exactly does the sentence fit into each paragraph?

- 1 Needless to say, the police were not impressed. text C, final sentence
- 2 In case you wanted to know, it was the zebra who won.
- 3 It turns out that some couples prefer their new partner to their old one!
- 4 Nowadays, producers are not content with seeing normal people doing ridiculous things; they want the famous to make a fool of themselves as well!
- 5 Although, surprisingly, a lot of the winners never go on to have great singing careers.
- 6 The most dangerous: learning to be a James Bond stuntman.

3 How many of these programmes or versions of them exist in your country?

4 Which do you think are good viewing and which are a waste of time?

5 Identify passive constructions in the text. Why are they so common? Which tense is the most frequently used?

EXAMPLE: Ten people's lives are transformed ...

Interactive TV

Reading

Reality TV is here to stay

It all started in the early 90s with 'The Real World' on MTV. Then, reality TV invaded homes around the world in 2001 with 'Big Brother', 'Fame Academy' and the rest. Now, you would think that TV companies would be pulling the plugs on the interactive programme format. But there's plenty more to come. In fact, producers are trying to come up with new ideas all the time ... Here's a look at new reality shows from around the world:



A

Wife Swap, Italy

Contestants exchange husbands / wives and boyfriends / girlfriends for two weeks with often explosive results. Camera crews film their every move at their respective homes and the audience votes on the best and the worst of the new couples.

B

Pop Idol, South America

Already a huge hit in the United States, this Latin American version of reality TV's most famous programme – it's called *Operación Triunfo* in Spain and *Fame Academy* in the UK – transforms everyday people into pop stars. Audiences vote for who should be eliminated from the competition each week.

C

££ Swag, UK ££

Members of the public are tempted into committing illegal acts. Hidden cameras film people's responses to temptation. In the show, luxury cars are left unlocked in bad neighbourhoods, windows are left open and wallets are dropped on streets.

D

I'm a Celebrity ... Get me out of here!, UK

In this show, seven celebrities are taken to a mysterious and remote destination for two weeks. Every day, one of the celebrities has to do a task to get food for the group, such as swimming through shark-infested waters. The public have to vote for which celebrity should do the task and then who should be eliminated.

E

Man vs Beast, USA

Teams of people and animals compete in crazy sporting events. The unlikely contestants have included a team of midgets versus an elephant to see who can pull an aeroplane across a desert; a human hot-dog-eating champion competing against a bear; and a world class sprinter trying to beat a giraffe and a zebra in a race.

F

Faking It, UK

Ten people's lives are transformed as they spend an intensive four-week coaching programme doing something completely different from their real jobs: becoming, for example, TV directors, DJs or photographers. Each faker has to look right, speak right and do their new jobs well enough to fool a panel of expert judges.

1 Which of the programmes (A-F) include the following characteristics? (Two or more programmes can apply to each question.)

- 1 TV audience participation
- 2 competition between different partners
- 3 famous people
- 4 people doing things they wouldn't normally do
- 5 intensive training and coaching
- 6 temptations

2 Match these remaining sentences with texts A-F. Where exactly does the sentence fit into each paragraph?

- 1 Needless to say, the police were not impressed. text C, final sentence
- 2 In case you wanted to know, it was the zebra who won.
- 3 It turns out that some couples prefer their new partner to their old one!

4 Nowadays, producers are not content with seeing normal people doing ridiculous things; they want the famous to make a fool of themselves as well!

- 5 Although, surprisingly, a lot of the winners never go on to have great singing careers.
- 6 The most dangerous: learning to be a James Bond stuntman.

3 How many of these programmes or versions of them exist in your country?

4 Which do you think are good viewing and which are a waste of time?

5 Identify passive constructions in the text. Why are they so common? Which tense is the most frequently used?
EXAMPLE: Ten people's lives are transformed ...

Reading section 5: original version

8.1 Changing the rules

Grammar	Second Conditional
Can do	talk about cause and result

Speaking

1 Discuss.

- Why is New York City famous? Think about the people, the lifestyle, how New York City appears in films, etc.
- What was New York City like a few years ago/a hundred years ago? How do you think it has changed?
- Have you ever been to New York City? Would you like to go/go back? Why/Why not?
- Do you know any other names for New York City?

Reading

- Read about some changes in New York City. Which of your ideas from question 2 above are mentioned?



New York used to be the city that never sleeps. These days it's the city that never smokes, drinks or does anything naughty (at least, not in public). The Big Apple is quickly turning into the Forbidden Apple.

If you wanted a glass of wine with your picnic in Central Park, could you have one? No chance. Drinking alcohol in public isn't allowed. If you decided to feed the birds with the last crumb of your sandwich, you could be arrested. It's illegal. If you went to a bar for a drink and a cigarette, that would be OK, wouldn't it? Er ... no. You can't smoke in public in New York City.

What's going on? Why is the city that used to be so open-minded becoming like this? The mayor of New York is behind it all. He has brought in a whole lot of new laws to stop citizens from doing what they want, when they want.

The press are scandalised¹. Even the New York police have joined the argument. They recently spent \$100,000 on a 'Don't blame the cop'² campaign. One New York police officer said, 'We raise money for the city by giving people fines for breaking some very stupid laws. It's all about money.'

The result is a lot of fines for minor offences. Yousf Kasbida, an Israeli tourist, fell asleep on the subway. When he woke up, two police officers fined him because he had fallen asleep on two seats (you mustn't use two seats in the subway). Elle and Serge Schroitman were fined for blocking a driveway with their car. It was their own driveway.

The angry editor of *Vanity Fair* magazine, Graydon Carter, says, 'Under New York City law it is acceptable to keep a gun in your place of work, but not an

- Read the text again. Mark the statements true (T) or false (F)?

- Some activities have recently become illegal in New York. ☐
- It is now illegal to smoke or drink alcohol anywhere in New York. ☐
- Eating sandwiches in the park is illegal. ☐
- The police like the new laws. ☐
- It is illegal to sleep on the subway. ☐
- Elle and Serge Schroitman were fined because they parked in the wrong place. ☐
- The editor of *Vanity Fair* magazine thinks some of the new laws are stupid. ☐
- Some people like the new laws. ☐
- New York is now clean and safe compared to in the past. ☐



empty ashtray'. He should know. The police came to his office and took away his ashtray.

But not all of New York's inhabitants are complaining. Marcia Dugan, 72, said, 'The city has changed for the better. If more cities had these laws, America would be a better place to live.' Nixon Palotkis, 38, a barman, said, 'I like the new laws. If people smoked in here, we'd go home smelling of cigarettes.'

Recent figures show that New York now has fewer crimes per 100,000 people than 193 other US cities. And it's true - it's safer, cleaner and more healthy than before. But let's be honest - who goes to New York for its clean streets?

Glossary

- ¹ scandalised (adj) = shocked/angry
² cop (noun) = police officer (US English)

4 Discuss.

- What is the writer's attitude to the new laws in New York, and to the mayor? Is the article 100% serious? How do you know?
- Do you think the laws in the article are 'stupid'?
- Would these laws be popular in your country?
- Should smoking be banned in all public places?
- Which is more important - individual freedom, or health and safety for everyone?

Reading section 5: modified version

8.1 Changing the rules

Grammar Second Conditional
Can do talk about cause and result

- 2 Read about some changes in New York City.
Which of your ideas from question 2 above are mentioned?



The Forbidden Apple

New York used to be the city that never sleeps. These days it's the city that never smokes, drinks or does anything naughty (at least, not in public). The Big Apple is quickly turning into the Forbidden Apple.

If you wanted a glass of wine with your picnic in Central Park, could you have one? No chance. Drinking alcohol in public isn't allowed. If you decided to feed the birds with the last crumbs of your sandwich, you could be arrested. It's illegal. If you went to a bar for a drink and a cigarette, that would be OK, wouldn't it? Er ... no. You can't smoke in public in New York City.

What's going on? Why is the city that used to be so open-minded becoming like this? The mayor of New York is behind it all. He has brought in a whole lot of new laws to stop citizens from doing what they want, when they want.

The press are scandalised¹. Even the New York police have joined the argument. They recently spent \$100,000 on a 'Don't blame the cop'² campaign. One New York police officer said, 'We raise money for the city by giving people fines for breaking some very stupid laws. It's all about money.'

The result is a lot of fines for minor offences. Yoav Kashida, an Israeli tourist, fell asleep on the subway. When he woke up, two police officers fined him because he had fallen asleep on two seats (you mustn't use two seats in the subway). Elle and Serge Schroitman were fined for blocking a driveway with their car. It was their own driveway.

The angry editor of *Vanity Fair* magazine, Graydon Carter, says, 'Under New York City law it is acceptable to keep a gun in your place of work, but not an



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- 6 Elle and Serge Schroitman were fined because they parked in the wrong place. ☐
- 7 The editor of *Vanity Fair* magazine thinks some of the new laws are stupid. ☐
- 8 Some people like the new laws. ☐
- 9 New York is now clean and safe compared to in the past. ☐

- 4 Discuss.

- 1 What is the writer's attitude to the new laws in New York, and to the mayor? Is the article 100% serious? How do you know?
- 2 Do you think the laws in the article are 'stupid'?
- 3 Would these laws be popular in your country?
- 4 Should smoking be banned in all public places?
- 5 Which is more important – individual freedom, or health and safety for everyone?

Reading

- 1 What is the connection between The Sex Pistols, Hugh Grant and FCUK? What do you think the text will be about?



- 2 Read the first two paragraphs of the text on the right and check your answers.
- 3 Read the rest of the text. Are these statements true or false. If false, explain why.
- The text advises teachers to teach their students a few light swear words.
 - The author believes that seeing the FCUK logo on London's streets is in bad taste.
 - According to Jean Aitchison, some swearwords are less taboo now.
 - Words which attack people's race are now considered more taboo.
 - The general public in the UK doesn't agree with the survey's results.
 - There seems to be a connection between use of language and social change.
- 4 Which summary best expresses the text's message?
- There are more swearwords used in the UK now than in the past and they are now totally acceptable.
 - Swearwords appear more frequently in the media, and some are not as taboo as they once were.
 - It is wrong for students to use such bad language especially in a multicultural society.
- 5 Here are some 'mild' exclamations in English which can be used instead of a swearword.
- | | | | |
|--------|--------|---------|---------|
| shoot! | darn! | heck! | blimey! |
| fudge! | sugar! | crikey! | bother! |
- Do you have any similar ones in your language?

TERMS OF ABUSE

Most students of a foreign language, at one time or another, have asked their teacher to tell them a couple of 'useful' swearwords. A sensible teacher can avoid the embarrassment of having to teach these words by saying: 'Look around you, there are swearwords everywhere, you don't need me to tell you'.

Of course, there was a time when swearwords really were taboo, when you could only find them in the novels of D.H. Lawrence or James Joyce or in the lyrics of punk rockers like The Sex Pistols. But, now the popular media is full of these 'light' terms of abuse. Just think of the movies: Hugh Grant used the f-word nine times in the opening of the hit film 'Four Weddings and a Funeral'. On the high streets, the clothes shop chain French Connection invented the daring logo 'FCUK', which became the fashionable t-shirt to wear a couple of years ago. Their huge new store (and logo) sits next door to Harrods in the smartest part of London. Bad language is everywhere and the only warning you might find is a Parental Advisory sticker on an Eminem CD.

'It is a matter of changing taboos', says Jean Aitchison, professor of Language and Communication at Oxford University. 'In the last century, it was religious swearing that upset people', she says. 'Then, in the mid-20th century, sexual swearing. But these days people get far more upset about politically incorrect language'. Words like 'Paki' or 'Jew' seem innocent but, when used as terms of abuse, are now much more offensive than saying 'Jesus Christ'. A recent survey conducted by the Advertising Standards Authority and the BBC supports this view - the UK's general public considers racial abuse (and abuse of minorities) to be the most serious form of insult around. This is almost certainly due to the greater visibility of all minorities in our society - gays, the handicapped and racial groups now have a greater role to play in the world around us.

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shoot!	darn!	heck!	blimey!
fudge!	sugar!	crickey!	bother!

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